Lesson 16 - Nutrition, Mind And The Emotions

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1. Introduction

1.1 Mental Well-Being Is Dependent Upon Good Nutrition

Proper nutrition is not only the foundation of physical health, but it is also the prerequisite for emotional and mental well-being. "A sound mind in a sound body" is how the Greeks of two thousand years ago expressed this relationship. Today we have such terms as psychosomatic, holistic health, dietetics and so forth that also point out the growing awareness that the health of the mind is inseparable from the health of the body.

Nor should this observation be surprising in the least. Illnesses and poor physical health give rise to feelings of anxiety, worry and depression. And, similarly, mental stress and emotional upset can contribute to the many sicknesses commonly thought to be physical in origin. So interdependent are the health of the body and mind that there can be no such thing as a "depressed healthy person" or a "schizophrenic physically sound individual."

It can be said that radiant physical health begets perfect emotional and mental poise and a calm, clear mind produces physical well-being. There is no disputing the fact that a healthy mental and emotional state can be insured through good nutrition.

The fact that mental well-being depends upon nutrition should be obvious if we realize that the quality of our blood determines the quality of our thoughts. Like all other organs, our brain receives its sustenance in the form of oxygen and nutrients carried in the bloodstream. If the blood is almost wholly withdrawn from the brain, unconsciousness occurs. If the brain is drained of blood for a short time, death results.

When the oxygen content of the blood drops due to poor respiration, the oxygen available to the brain also drops, and we become listless and apathetic. Our mental processes become slow and confused.

If vital nutrients are missing from the bloodstream, or if toxins are being circulated through the body, the brain is as surely affected just as the liver, kidneys, bones and muscles are.

In extreme cases of a toxic bloodstream or poor nutrient availability, mental illnesses result. These

illnesses are obvious to even the casual observer. However, in the more subtle cases of "blood poisoning" brought about by faulty nutrition, the mind is also intimately affected.

In fact, the majority of the population has never enjoyed complete mental health because their bloodstreams, which nurture the brain, are in a constant state of pollution. Few people have experienced the crystal clarity of acute mental perception that accompanies a purified bloodstream. Consequently, most people accept their daily fears and frustrations as natural. With optimum nutrition, however, such a compromise in our mental well-being is unnecessary.

1.2 Emotions and Their Relationship to Diet and. Health

Emotions, too, play an intricate role in nutrition—both by affecting our choice of diet and by influencing the use of nutrients within the body. In fact, perhaps the most important reason why optimum nutrition is not universally applied is that eating has so many emotional connotations. To many people, eating and food are connected with the emotional states of pleasure, pain, reward, punishment and so forth.

All of us have pleasant or unpleasant associations with food, and we resist changing these associations. As a consequence, the average person often thinks that proper nutrition means giving up those foods they emotionally favor and eating those they hate. "If it tastes good, it's fattening" is the common joke among dieters.

Not only do these emotions influence our choice of diet, but the diet in turn influences the emotions. Certain foods play havoc with the blood sugar level, sending people into periods of depression or irritability. Other foods make calm children noisy and hyperactive, while certain foods, such as a chocolate candy bar, have been known to trigger schizoid attacks in susceptible individuals.

Clearly, nutrition plays a vital role in our mental and emotional health. By studying this role in detail, we can discover the optimum diet and the proper mental and emotional attitudes that promote total health in the individual.

2. How Foods Affect Mental And Emotional Health

In an interesting story about a family who followed an optimum diet of chiefly fresh fruits, complemented by some nuts and seeds, the three children in the family had been following a predominantly all-fruit diet for several years. During that period, they were extremely well-behaved. They were kind and gracious to their parents and to each other. They cooperated in their work and play with no signs of irritability.

As an experiment, the mother one day fed the children several slices of whole wheat bread. Within an hour after the meal, the children were fighting among themselves and had several outbursts of anger and emotional fits.

Coincidental? Perhaps, but consider that many people are allergic to wheat products and that wheat eating is usually associated with warlike populations. (See the observation made by J. I. Rodale later in this lesson.)

The point here is that when a person follows a pure, high-quality diet, any substandard foods consumed will quickly make their presence known by their effects on the mental and emotional states.

Not only does wheat eating result in health problems and consequent emotional and mental disturbances,

but also eating foods high in fat tends to dull the mind and cloud the thinking. Fat digestion is so demanding that much blood is diverted away from the brain to the digestive system. As a result, the thinking processes become slower and a mild form of depression occurs.

The above examples represent only mild cases. When extremely poor-quality foods are eaten, their effects on the mind and emotions are much more dramatic—sometimes causing complete mental breakdowns and personality transformations. Unhealthful foods and their effects will be discussed later.

The effects of food on the mind have been studied for many thousands of years by Oriental philosophers. Many of these philosophers have gone so far as to categorize the effects that many commonly-eaten foods have on the mental state.

2.1 Classification of Foods

Although Western science has only recently discovered the relationship between mental states and nutrition, people in the Eastern countries have been aware of the effects of diet on the mind since around 4000 B.C.

The *Bhagavad Gita*, an ancient Hindu text on spiritual conduct, classifies foods into three types:

1. Pure foods ("sattvic"),
2. Stimulating foods ("rajasic"), and
3. Impure or rotten foods ("tamasic").

2.1.1 Pure Foods

Pure foods, which consist primarily of fresh fruits and vegetables, are said to bring calmness and tranquility to the mind. These foods are reputed to increase the clarity of mind and sweetness of disposition. They are especially recommended by those desiring spiritual growth and a meditative mind.

2.1.2 Stimulating Foods

Stimulating foods including spices, meat, eggs, onions, etc., are said to create animal passions and to cause a restless, unsatisfied state of mind. These foods contribute to nervous disorders and emotional outbreaks.

2.1.3 Impure Foods

Impure foods which include putrified, processed and preserved foods, decrease thinking capacity, dull the senses and contribute to chronic mental ailments. They accelerate the aging process and cause early death.

Regardless of our particular beliefs in religious systems, we should appreciate the painstaking observations made over thousands of years by these students of the diet and the mind. They have long known, as is being discovered by scientists, that the quality of our food directly affects the quality of our thoughts.

In his series on *Diet and War*, J. I. Rodale provided a correlation between a country's tendency toward war or peace based on its national dietary. He discovered that the national attitude was more warlike and aggressive in proportion to the amounts of sugar, meat, wheat and rye products consumed by its populace. Throughout history, it has been the meat-eating nomads who have made war on the peaceful agrarian tribes.

2.1.4 The Two Ways That Food Affects Our Mind and Emotions

Basically, foods affect our mental and emotional state in two ways:

1. They either furnish or deplete vital nutrients upon which our mental and emotional health depend, and
2. They either do or do not produce toxic by-products, in the body which poison the brain and contribute to emotional problems.

As for some examples, eating grapes furnishes the blood with readily-assimilated natural sugars and minerals that are conducive to mental activity; consuming white sugar, on the other hand, depletes the body of B-vitamins, and this leads to nervousness and mental depression. Eating fresh raw foods places little or no toxic matter in the body; whereas eating preserved and cooked foods saturates the bloodstream with toxins that poison the body and interfere with brain function.

We can deduce from the above observations that optimum nutrition for physical, mental and emotional health consists of selecting those foods that, first, can supply the body with all of its nutrient needs and that do not interfere with the nutritional balance, and, second, contribute little or no toxic by-products.

Foods that disrupt the nutritional balance of the body and toxify the system are the nutritional culprits of poor mental and emotional health. Most of these culprits are actually "nonfoods" (such as sugar, alcohol, caffeine drinks, etc.) and have no legitimate place in the human diet.

2.1.5 Nutritional Robbers

Every day millions of people ingest various substances that have no food value at all. Worse yet, these "nonfoods" not only do not supply any needed nutrients, but they also rob the body of vital minerals, vitamins, etc. As a result, eating these nonfoods cheats the body of nutrients and has profound harmful effects on the mind and emotions.

Perhaps the most pervasive and insidious nutritional robber is white sugar.

2.1.6 Sugar

Sugars occur naturally in most of our foods. Fruits especially are high in sugars that supply the body and mind with high-quality fuel. Sugars in their natural forms as they occur in fresh, unprocessed foods are a valuable part of the diet.

Refined white sugar, however, is a chemical menace because *it lacks the essential minerals and B-vitamins for its metabolism*. As a result, the body surrenders its own minerals and B-vitamins for use in metabolizing refined sugar.

The sugar-caused depletion of vitamins and minerals from the body upsets the body's nutritional balance and predisposes the individual to mental and emotional illnesses that have their roots in nutrient deficiencies.

White sugar causes emotional outbreaks, especially in children and adolescents. Interestingly enough, it was discovered that the juvenile offender in Chicago on the average consumed over three times more white sugar in his diet than did the nonoffender. Schools that have removed their carbonated drink and candy machines have discovered that vandalism and absenteeism also decrease.

Long-term sugar consumption, as indulged by the majority of the American population, leads to chronic blood-sugar level problems that may manifest as diabetes or hypoglycemia. People with such blood-sugar problems are prone to periods of depression, irritability and nervous attacks. Many times they actually experience "nervous shakes" as their blood-sugar level slides and rises.

An abnormal plunge in blood-sugar levels is insidious—it sends shock waves through every cell in the body and affects the brain and nervous system most of all. An erratic mental state results, and some of the accompanying symptoms are: headaches, fatigue, insomnia, irritability, restlessness, crying spells, nervous breakdowns, excessive worry, inability to concentrate, depression, forgetfulness, suicidal thoughts, illogical fears, allergies and so on.

2.1.7 Caffeine, Nicotine and Alcohol

Besides sugar, some other nutritional robbers are the cigarette, the cup of coffee and the martini.

Nicotine, as obtained from smoking tobacco, adds to metabolic dysfunctioning. It impairs the absorption of vitamin C and interferes with the blood circulation. By constricting the blood vessels, nicotine robs the brain of its essential nutrients, particularly blood glucose, its major fuel. In fact, not only does nicotine inhibit vitamin C absorption, but it actually destroys some or all of the vitamin C already in the blood. One of the mental effects of vitamin C depletion is increased irritability. Smokers tend to be quick to irritate and often exhibit emotional outbursts.

The drug, caffeine, found in coffee, tea, cola drinks and chocolate, causes nervous disturbances, including anxiety. One to three cups of coffee contain enough caffeine to cause anxiety and other emotional disturbances. Caffeine also stimulates insulin secretion, thereby disturbing the blood-sugar level in the body.

Alcohol, too, disturbs the blood-sugar level. In fact, low blood sugar occurs in 70-90% of all alcoholics. As a result of studies, it was also discovered that most alcoholics suffer from a niacin (vitamin B3) deficiency that leads to periods of depression and feelings of lack of self-worth. Such emotional states may then lead to more alcohol drinking in an effort to escape these feelings.

All of the above-mentioned nutritional robbers tend to be self-perpetuating; that is, they create the very conditions that often make the user of these items return to them. Caffeine withdrawal symptoms, for example, can be halted by drinking another cup of coffee. The irritability caused by smoking is soothed by another cigarette. The "shakes" caused by a period of sobriety can be removed by another slug of whiskey. The crashing blood-sugar level created by sugar intake can be temporarily raised by a candy bar or other sugary "food." In short, all of these nonfood items are actually *addictive drugs* just as opium and heroin are. If we are truly concerned about the "drug problem" in America, it would be best if we set our own house in order first. This would remove the cause of many of 6ur mental and emotional problems that result from faulty nutrition.

3. Emotional Aspects Of Diet And Digestion

So far we have discussed how nutrition affects the mind—specifically, how a nutrient deficiency may contribute to a mental or emotional illness. It is equally important to realize that, while diet does affect our mental and emotional well-being, our emotional state in, turn, in influences both our choice of diet and how well our food is digested and assimilated.

3.1 How Negative Emotions Inhibit Digestion

Depressions, worry, nervousness, anxiety, tension and other negative emotions are all based on the primary emotion of fear. Worry is fear of the unknown; anxiety is fear of upcoming situations; tension is fear of people or demands made by people; nervousness is fear of one's own inability to adequately handle the responsibilities of daily living, and so on.

When primitive man was afraid, he usually tried to run away from the source of the fear. When animals are afraid, their first impulse is to flee. Modern man, however, has fears about the intangibles in life. Most of his fears are due to internal factors, not external, and he cannot run away from them.

Although human fears have moved away from concern about the wild jungle animals to worries over

mortgage payments, etc., the physiological responses to these fears have not changed in millions of years.

Panic is an extreme manifestation of fear, and it is instructive to trace the physiological changes in the organism that accompany this emotion.

As soon as a threat to the organism is manifested as a strong fear, a complex chain of events begins that eventually affects every cell in the body.

First, the hypothalamus gland near the brain transmits a series of strong signals through the spinal column to nerve centers throughout the body. In the throat, large amounts of thyrotopic hormone is released into the system to stimulate the organism. Near the kidneys, a flood of adrenocorticotropic hormone is produced as the adrenal glands are called into action. These hormones then trigger a series of programmed responses throughout the body.

The blood vessels in the skin and the digestive system undergo a rapid constriction to direct the blood to the muscles in the arms and legs (hence, the term "pale with fright"). This prepares the body for the "flight or fight" response to the fear.

Simultaneously, the spleen is contracting and pouring out a large amount of white corpuscles and platelets into the bloodstream in order to take care of any anticipated injuries. The liver also forces out a stream of blood sugar to feed the extreme demands made by the aroused system.

The saliva in the mouth dries up since there is no desire for food in the presence of fear. The nostrils expand to take in more oxygen and the eyes dilate to take in more visual stimuli. In extreme fear, the abdominal gases move downward and force any stool or urine in the system out, thus lightening the body and preparing it for flight.

The emotion of fear produces the proper physiological reactions in the body so that it may run quickly away or fight if it is cornered. These types of changes in the body are actually very beneficial if there is an imminent danger of physical harm.

These same reactions occur, usually to a lesser degree, for an intangible fear as for a physical threat.

If we worry about bill collectors or rush-hour traffic, our bodies go through similar physiological reactions to when our lives are physically threatened.

Now let's look a little closer at the relationship between fear and digestion.

First, it is obvious that no one whose life is in danger is going to have an appetite.

Dr. Herbert M. Shelton once described an experiment performed on a cat that had just finished eating. The cat's stomach was observed with X rays, and digestion was proceeding normally. A dog was then brought into the room and the cat took notice. Immediately all digestive processes in the cat halted. Its stomach ceased moving and the digestive juices stopped secreting. When the dog was removed, the cat's digestion resumed.

Food cannot be digested or assimilated in the presence of fear. If we eat when we are worried, depressed, tense or fearful, the digestive system cannot handle the food properly. It may be only partially digested and lay fermenting or putrefying in the stomach.

We should never eat when we are emotionally upset or "out of sorts." If we are uncomfortable in body or mind, we should not eat until we feel better and regain our poise.

Additionally, it is not a good idea to try to eat while driving a car, discussing business or personal problems, reading disturbing news, watching television or in any situation that may give rise to intense emotions.

3.2 How Positive Emotions Enhance Digestion

Several years ago, a man was diagnosed by the medical profession as having terminal cancer. He was told that he probably had about six months to live.

He was released from the hospital and he ended his medical treatment as he went back home to live. For the first month or so, he was very depressed and laid in bed all day watching television. He was in constant pain.

Each day in the late afternoon he watched the cartoon programs on television before the evening news. He always laughed at the cartoons and noticed that by the end of the show his pain was not as noticable. It did return, however, as he watched the evening news.

He decided that there might be a relationship between his laughing and the subsidence of pain. He installed a videotape machine and then bought all the funny movies that he remembered from his youth.

He watched all the slapstick comedies he could find for hours at a time. He bought dozens of joke books and read them. He made it a point to laugh as much as possible during his waking hours.

Gradually, his pain left him. After six months, he was still alive and his cancer had been arrested.

Happy emotions do influence physiological processes in the body, just as do negative emotions. When we are cheerful, carefree and happy, we rarely become sick. One of the results of a happy disposition is improved digestion.

When we feel positive about ourselves and our surroundings, we relish our food more and it is more easily assimilated. Surrounding ourselves with good companionship, pleasant conversation and a wholesome environment makes eating a pleasure, and digestion progresses easily.

When we are relaxed, our stomach and other organs are less tense; they feel less constrained and can perform their tasks more easily. In fact, the physical act of laughing after a meal allows the food to pass more readily through the digestive tract.

We should make every effort to surround ourselves with pleasant emotions and thoughts before and during meals. Prayer, meditation or a period of silence before beginning a meal can help us to "wind down" our activities. By establishing a quiet period before we begin eating, we remove ourselves from the hurried emotions and past thoughts of the day. We take time to renew ourselves spiritually before we renew ourselves physically. Regardless of one's religious beliefs or lack of beliefs, it is simply common sense to observe a period of emotional poise and mental quiet before eating. This may take the form of a prayer, an affirmation about the food we are about to eat, or simply a period of quiet silence where we anticipate the enjoyment of the upcoming meal.

3.3 Emotional Factors and the Foods We Choose

Eating an optimum diet would be simple if we were all rational beings, freed from emotional conditioning. However, in the realm of diet, it is often the emotions and past habits that are king and queen instead of reason and clear perception.

We eat ice cream, spicy foods, candy and other destructive foods primarily because of emotional needs and emotional associations with these foods—not because of any true physiological need or premeditated reason.

People form emotional attachments to foods as a result of childhood experiences, past associations or self-conditioning. Consequently, certain foods are often eaten during particular emotional states, such as depression, etc., or in hopes of inducing a specific emotion, such as contentment or happiness.

For instance, ice cream is often associated with the rewards of childhood. When we were children, ice cream represented a treat or perhaps a sign of parental approval or indulgence. "If you'll be good, I'll buy you an ice cream cone," is a common promise of harried parents.

Thus, at an early age, ice cream is associated with "being good" and with parental approval. Consequently, when we have been good (such as staying on a good diet for a few weeks), we decide to play both parent and child and reward ourselves with a bowl of ice cream. Similarly, if we are feeling depressed or overwhelmed by life's problems, we may eat other childhood "reward" foods to temporarily escape our adult troubles.

Holidays such as Christmas and Thanksgiving are intimately associated with strong emotions and certain festive foods. So strong is this emotional association of food with holiday fun that some health-conscious individuals may eat turkey, pastries and sweets on a holiday in an effort to capture the childhood memories of days long past, as well as for parental approval in the present.

Please note that no value judgement is placed upon the emotional associations and attachments to food. To a certain extent, all of our food likes and dislikes are based upon emotions. Few people eat out of purely rational reasons, nor is it necessary to do so. What is necessary, however, is to be aware of the role emotions play in our food choices. If we are eating certain foods that are not conducive to health because of a disturbed emotional state, we should be aware of our behavior and try to approach our problems in some other manner besides food.

Foods themselves cannot satisfy emotional needs. If we are depressed, eating chocolate chip cookies may stir the memories of a carefree childhood, but they do not remove the cause of that depression. Indeed, the foods we are eating may be creating the emotional problems we are trying to escape from.

For example, in our culture, most children are brought up to associate sweet, sugary foods with approval, love, affection, etc. A child is often given candy as a reward. This type of conditioning becomes an internal pattern which is carried over into adulthood.

When grown-up people feel lonely, bored or in need of reinforcement, they may buy an ice cream cone or put money in the nearest carbonated drink machine. They eat the sugary reward food and feel somewhat better emotionally for a few minutes. This illustrates that a negative emotional state, (boredom, insecurity, loneliness, etc.) may influence the selection of and eating of nonfood items (candy, cookies, snack foods, etc.).

These nonfood items then contribute to a nutritional imbalance which may, in turn, re-create the emotional state that one is trying to escape from. For instance, the refined sugar in sweet foods gives a temporary rise in energy and a false emotional "high." After this energy surge, the sugar has the effect of depleting the body of B-vitamins and other nutrients. This sugar-created depletion then sets the stage for additional emotional distress and depression.

A seemingly inescapable cycle is thereby created: A person is continually eating sugar-filled foods in an effort to escape the depression that the foods themselves are helping to create.

3.4 Food Likes and Dislikes

Many of our food cravings and our dislike of certain foods arise from past emotional associations. There are many teenagers and young adults today who refuse to eat vegetables because, as children, they were scolded by their parents if they did not clean their plates of all the overcooked, lifeless vegetables served them.

Now that they are older, they associate their refusal to eat vegetables with independence from their parents.

A man of this writer's acquaintance will not eat fresh fruit of any sort. As a young child he was forcefed watermelon by his parents as punishment for not eating his supper.

As another example, the widespread use of dairy products has its roots in emotional childhood associations. Young children were told by their parents (who were told by the dairy industry) that "milk makes you strong." School teachers had posters of the "Basic Four" food groups, with milk prominently

displayed. The drinking of milk is also associated with being bottle-fed as an infant. Milk drinking may then become the bridge between the emotionally stressed life of the adult and the carefree world of the child.

3.5 Emotions and the Quantity of Food We Eat

Not only are our food choices determined in a large part by our emotions, but so is the amount of food we eat and the manner in which we eat. When we are stressed or nervous, we tend to bolt our food down, thereby eating "on the run" and scarcely taking time to chew our food, properly.

3.6 Overeating

Overeating, too, is chiefly an emotionally-caused problem. Food for the overeater becomes both an escape from dissatisfaction with life and a drug to desensitize the emotions. Compulsive eating when no true hunger is present serves as a form of sensory indulgence little different from alcoholism, drug addiction or sexual excess.

The compulsive eater often uses food as an emotional salve. Most commonly, it is used as a substitute for feelings of love and affections. Chocolate candy bars and potato chips may replace meaningful personal relationships in the overeater's life. Food no longer is used as fuel and nutrients for the body, but becomes an easily obtainable form of pleasure that can be indulged in with a minimum amount of social disapproval.

Overeating results primarily from a negative self-image. Compulsive eaters often believe that they are unworthy of being loved. To prove this to themselves, they often become obese and unattractive. They reason, "No one wants me now because I am unattractive. I am fat." By becoming physically unattractive, the obese person is able to avoid facing the real problems behind their lack of love or affection. These problems may be real or imagined psychological unattractiveness or a personality disorder.

Since overeating is often an emotional problem, it can be effectively solved only through a change in the emotional state of the overeater. If compulsive eaters can change their food choices so that they are at least overeating on healthy foods, and not "junk foods," they will at least avoid the additional emotional problems that the "junk foods" create. The chief solution to obesity is the development of a more positive self-image and an understanding that the person is deserving of love and affection.

3.7 Undereating and Dieting

Like the overeater, the compulsive dieter or undereater also usually suffers from emotional or psychological problems. The phenomenon of "anorexia nervosa"—dieting to the point of starvation—has become an increasingly common problem, especially among young women.

Whereas overeating often comes from a desire to "reward" oneself, undereating is often an attempt to "punish" oneself or the people living around the undereater (particularly the parents). By withholding needed food, the undereater punishes himself for either real or imagined personal shortcomings. Undereating becomes a method of punishing the parents in particular, because the refusal of food is a rejection of the most basic child-parent relationship—that of nurturing.

Of course abstaining from adequate food intake to the point of starvation is the extreme result of an emotional disturbance. It should be pointed out that controlled fasting undertaken for reasons of health is not the same as an erratic and prolonged nutrient-deficient and calorie-poor diet.

Although not so extreme as anorexia nervosa, millions of Americans regularly place themselves on diets that are trumpeted in the latest magazines and paperbacks or in mimeographed office newsletters. Often these self-prescribed diets are so poor in vital nutrients and high in empty calories that they cause

serious damage to the kidneys, liver, stomach, etc. As a consequence, the mania for dieting among Americans is creating a nation of mental and emotional misfits.

Let's clarify the difference between *fasting* and *dieting* for weight loss. Many weight-loss diets as published in the popular press permit the dieter to continue eating harmful, low-calorie foods while simultaneously reducing the amount of beneficial foods in the diet. As a result, severe nutritional inbalances occur that may contribute to emotional problems. In comparison, fasting allows the body to reestablish its nutritional balance. So successful is fasting in this regard that it has been used to treat severely emotionally-disturbed patients who had nutrient inbalances throughout their bodies.

In many weight-reducing diets, the person is allowed to have all the coffee, tea or diet drinks desired since these drinks have no calories. Such drinks severely disrupt the already disturbed blood-sugar level and may plunge the dieter into deep depression. Add to this that a dieting person usually increases his smoking habit (if he already has one), and the stage is set for additional nutritional inbalances.

One popular diet instructs the person to give up all carbohydrates (such as fresh fruit and vegetables) and eat only protein (such as cooked meat). This invariably results in protein poisoning, metabolic disturbance, mental confusion, lack of emotional poise, and liver and kidney damage. Incidentally, it is just such a diet that was used by the ancient Chinese to break down the emotional resolve and mental health of their captured prisoners.

Most weight-loss diets make the same nutritional mistakes that lead to emotional problems. First, they ignore the differences between *refined* carbohydrates (which supply incomplete calories and little or no vitamins or minerals) and *unrefined* carbohydrates (which have calories that provide essential nutrients). Second, many of the foods recommended are "reward foods," such as a small slice of pie, a few vanilla wafers, some raspberry jam, etc. These types of foods are included in these diets to entice the person to stay on the diet. Literally, he is allowed to have his cake and eat it too, although not without accompanying difficulties.

What happens on many weight-loss diets is that the dieters grow irritable, depressed and confused. They deprive themselves of needed nutrients by filling up on low-calorie nonfoods that contribute to the nutritional inbalance. The nutrient deprivation and toxic by-products created by these diets often produce drastic personality changes. It is not uncommon to hear the spouses of many dieters remark: "I'd rather have you fat and happy than the way you are now."

Israeli researchers performed a study on ten men and women who were committed to a psychiatric institution as a result of the mental and emotional problems caused by their erratic dieting. They discovered that drastic weight reduction through conventional dieting had its most devastating effect on the nervous system. Six of the ten dieters had never suffered from emotional problems prior to this first attempt at weight loss.

Weight loss and weight control can be accomplished without accompanying negative mental and emotional changes by fasting or by consuming a proper diet. Supervised fasting not only produces a loss in weight, but it also allows a nutritional balance to occur in the body for continued mental and emotional health. The eating of low-calorie, *high-nutrient* foods such as, fresh raw fruits and vegetables allows the weight to normalize without denying the body needed nutrients.

3.8 Diet and the Ego

One last area of dieting and the mind needs to be covered, especially since it is most applicable to those persons who are truly concerned about their diet and are searching for a way to improve their overall nutrition. This area is the relationship between personal pride, or "ego," and the diet we adopt.

Almost everyone is emotionally attached to the diet they follow. I have heard people who dine exclusively at "fast food" restaurants defend their diet with nutritional charts of french fries and chocolate malts. Meat eaters argue that humans are naturally carnivorous. People who follow a

macrobiotic diet believe fervently that grains should be a major part of our diet.

Each group is intensely emotional about the diet they adopt. They believe that they exclusively are correct, and they have a lot of personal pride invested in their chosen diet.

This is especially true of people who have actually taken the time to investigate the effects of diet on health. When they finally discover "their diet," they often become blinded to reason. They embrace their new diet as a mother clutches her newborn, and they will defend it with as much emotion (though scarcely with as much reason).

This is not to imply that there is no optimum diet. Most certainly a best diet does exist, and it is the one that promotes physical, mental, and emotional and spiritual health better than all others. Such a diet, however, can only be recognized and evaluated when we divest ourselves of passionate emotion and self-invested ego.

This is very difficult to do. We are all attached to our personal ideas and theories. We all like to believe that we are right. No one likes to realize that he has been mistaken about a cherished belief, be it political, religious or nutritional.

However, if we are to push beyond emotional and personal identifications with diet and understand the proper role of nutrition in health, then we must be open-minded and be willing to let go of past beliefs when they no longer serve us.

Certainly, personal experience and education can help us in choosing the proper diet. Difficult as it may seem, however, we must approach the idea of optimum nutrition with as few preconceptions and prejudices as possible.

Only when we are mentally and emotionally "clear" will we be able to recognize the correct path to proper diet and, indeed, proper living.

4. Methods For Overcoming Negative Emotional Conditioning

We have seen how many poor diet habits are connected with emotional conditioning from childhood and in our adult lives. To change our eating habits and to adopt a better way of nutrition involves changes on an emotional level as well as changes in our daily activities.

Awareness is the most valuable method we can use in overcoming emotional associations with destructive foods such as sweets, fried foods, etc. If we are conscious of why we want a bowl of ice cream, we are in a better position to deal with that desire. By recognizing the impulse as arising from past emotional conditioning and *not from a current real or physiological need*, we are better able to change our habits.

Along with this awareness is a need for education about the foods we desire or avoid. If we understand how eating white sugar forces the body to utilize its own supply of vital nutrients for its metabolism, we are less likely to eat it. If we know the many health benefits of raw foods, we are in a position to learn to enjoy them for that sake. So we must first educate ourselves about proper nutrition and then develop an awareness about the foods we put into our bodies.

Another important method for overcoming emotional conditioning is the development of a positive self-image. Many people indulge in self-destructive eating habits out of a desire to punish themselves for "not being good enough." If people see no worth in themselves, they will have a difficult time in

wanting to improve their health through a change in diet. The desire for good health often indicates a developing positive self-image. Many people suffer from feelings of inadequacy or inferiority. They do not feel they deserve optimum health. What we need to realize is that radiant health and well-being is a birthright of all human beings. Each of us deserves to be totally healthy in mind, body and soul, and we must regain this birthright through proper nutrition and a positive emotional attitude.

4.1 Affirmations

Along these lines, the use of affirmations and meditation can be useful in developing the positive emotional environment we need for making these changes in our diet and in our lives. Affirming the qualities we wish to develop within ourselves is a powerful method for overcoming past emotional conditioning. For example, if we have weak willpower in resisting destructive foods, we can say to ourselves daily:

> I am strong in will and restraint.
>
> I eat only those foods good for me.

These statements are called *affirmations*. An affirmation is simply a *positive statement we make about ourselves*. By using these positive statements, you can affect many changes at the emotional and mental level.

You should devise the affirmations that are suitable for you at a particular stage in your life. It is important that you state the emotional qualities you desire in a positive manner. For instance, instead of saying, "I will not worry," it is better to state: "I am calm, serene and centered." It is also beneficial if these statements are phrased in the present tense, *as if they are now occurring*.

These affirmations may be written daily or they may be repeated silently or out loud. Casually they should become a part of your daily life for several weeks to work effectively.

Affirmations are not magical, nor are they simply "self-hypnosis." They are an effective method for surrounding yourself with a positive environment and a healthy mental state in which to grow. They allow you to assume responsibility for your own emotional health, and they serve as a direct means of activating your latent powers. They are a form of a personally devised self-therapy that have only positive, nonharmful results.

Affirmations are the link between our conscious mind and our hidden emotions. As we consciously direct our energies toward a desired quality, we tend to attain that goal. If affirmations are used regularly and in good faith, we can rapidly outgrow those harmful emotional states that hinder our personal growth.

4.2 We Alone Are Responsible For Our Mental and Emotional Health

In 1865 Louis Pasteur made a discovery that is the basis of the "germ theory" of disease. This theory of disease suited modern man's ego quite well. No longer did he have to blame himself for the sicknesses caused by his own transgressions of the natural laws of health, but he could instead blame the germs that invaded his body.

The germ theory effectively shifted man's own personal responsibility for his health onto the shoulders of the medical profession who knew how to kill the offending germs. Consequently, man soon perceived his own personal health as something that was no longer in his hands.

This type of thinking asserts itself in other areas as well. If we feel mad or out of sorts with the world, it is always the fault of our parents, our spouse, our boss or the government. Somebody or something causes our emotional and mental problems. It surely isn't us, we think.

This desire to blame the failure of interpersonal relationships, or even complete emotional and mental breakdown, on "outside" factors such as hidden stress, poor home environment, etc., also allows us to shift the responsibility away from ourselves and to some other person or event. As a result, we seek outside help for these problems in the form of therapists, counselors, psychiatrists, etc.

The fact is, however, that a body that is properly cared for with good nutrition is able to withstand the major causes of emotional and mental illnesses, just as it is able to withstand the major causes of physical diseases.

If we assume responsibility for our own health and supply the body with the highest life-giving nutrition, we can also insure ourselves the peace of mind and stability of emotions that allow us to withstand stress and the other causes of mental and emotional illnesses. A properly nourished person can withstand factors that might provoke mental or emotional outbreaks in less-well-fed people.

In an article on marriage failures, Dr. Cecilia Rosenfeld stated: "One of the prime causes of marital discord—nutritional deficiency—is too often overlooked. In my own practice, I have found that, in a surprising number of broken marriages, spouses suffered from a blood-sugar imbalance. Many of those husbands and wives showed symptoms of irritability, violent temper, abnormal sensitivity and extreme fatigue. Corrective nutritional guidance dispelled these unpleasant symptoms for many spouses—and in the process, often bolstered their crumbling marriages."

Along the same line, Dr. Joseph Nichols, president of the Natural Food Associates, wrote: "The unhappily married are often suffering from dietary deficiencies more than from the kind of social incompatabilities traditional therapists seek to explore."

Blaming our problems on a demanding boss or argumentative spouse then is somewhat akin to ascribing all our physical problems to invisible germs. If we desire good mental and emotional health, we must work for it and assume full responsibility for this facet of our well-being as well. We must create the proper conditions for mental and emotional stability through proper diet and nutrition. This is where an optimum diet helps.

5. The Optimum Diet For Mental And Emotional Health

At this point, it is useful to summarize what we have learned so far about the relationship between nutrition and the mind and emotions in order to determine what constitutes an optimum diet.

First, to insure mental and emotional well-being, the diet must supply all needed nutrients in the form of unprocessed whole foods. Nutritional supplements are useless; they cannot be effectively used by the body and cannot be used to fill in nutrient gaps caused by a poor diet.

Second, all "foods" (nonfoods) that rob the body of nutrients must be eliminated in order to maintain the nutritional balance crucial to mental and emotional stability.

Third, foods that leave heavy toxic by-products in the bloodstream must not be eaten if we wish to avoid poisoning our body and our mind. Even small amounts of these toxins are enough to induce depression in most individuals.

Fourth, foods should be eaten in a harmonious environment with a calm, relaxed disposition.

Finally, foods should be eaten out of true physiological need when hunger is present. They should not be eaten as emotional substitutes, for stimulation or as a means of "escape."

Perhaps the most pressing need is the elimination of all nonfood' items from the diet. These nonfoods include white sugar, white flour, alcohol, salt, condiments, and all heavily-processed foods. These foods alone are the major causes of mental and emotional illnesses, and they perform no positive function in the body whatsoever.

Most, health-minded individuals and health-oriented dietary systems condemn these nonfoods as explicitly harmful. Nonfoods are indefensible from the standpoint of good nutrition and must be immediately eliminated from our diet if we wish to regain our natural mental and emotional stability.

The second priority is the elimination of all foods that leave toxic by-products in the body. Some of the foods which leave toxins in the body are: all foods with chemical additives and preservatives, meats, eggs, dairy products, herbs, artificial and preserved foods, fried foods, cooked foods and certain noxious vegetables such as onions, garlic, etc.

For those people who have not yet adopted a vegan diet (that is, a diet free from meat and all animal products), it is of extreme importance to eliminate all foods containing additives, preservatives, etc., in order to decrease the toxic overload that eating animal products produces. Animal products, and meat in particular, prevent full mental tranquility due to the amount of toxins both naturally contained in them and artificially added to them.

In addition to following a vegan diet, the amount of cooked food should be decreased and eliminated. Eating cooked foods results in a state of mental lassitude and deprives the body of the full nutrient range contained in the foods. For a remarkable state of mental clarity, a raw food diet is highly recommended.

What we discover after examining the above observations is that an optimum diet should consist primarily of the following foods: fresh fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds and sprouts eaten in an unprocessed state and in an harmonious environment.

These foods provide a full range of all needed nutrients; they leave little or no toxic by-products in the body; they do not result in body loss of any nutrients; nor do they upset the body's natural nutritional balance. They provide the foundation for total physical health and promote an optimum state of mind and excellent emotional health.

These foods alone will not guarantee total well-being—no diet can do that—but they will give us the needed foundation for mental and emotional health.

6. Questions & Answers

Whenever I'm depressed, I just want to eat and eat. I know it's bad, but what can I do to stop this?

> First, it's important to realize that most depression is caused by a morbid preoccupation with the self. You need to "get out of your self" to effectively combat depression. Food is just a way of trying to distract yourself from your depressive thoughts. Instead of eating, I suggest that you exercise vigorously. It has been discovered that intense activity, such as running and other exercise, is an effective way to deal with depressive tendencies. Also, you can tackle a chore that you have been putting off, or just try to help out another person. These are much more positive ways of dealing with depression than moping and eating.

I'm a businessman and I have to take clients out to lunch. I try to sell them on my ideas and I usually get a bad case of indgestion. What do you think?

Unfortunately our society tends to make eating into a business or a required social affair all too often. If you must conduct business while eating, then I would suggest that you make sure you choose foods which are easily digested, such as salads or fruits. In addition, concentrate on the actual chewing of each mouthful of food. If you direct your attention as much as possible to the physical sensation of eating, you will be more relaxed as you eat. Always eat lightly and in small quantities if you must dine in a potentially tense situation.

I'm a little overweight and I resent you implying that it's because of an emotional problem. My mother and grandmother are also overweight, and it just runs in the family. I've been told it's glandular.

It's interesting that people think fat may be inherited or that it is "natural." No animals other than humans are obese. No other animals experience glandular disorders that cause weight gain unless they were fed an inadequate and unnatural diet. It is true that obesity runs in the family, but this is because poor dietary habits are transmitted from parent to child—not because of some predisposed glandular condition. True, you may not feel emotionally "sick," although resentment itself is not a healthy motional reaction, but your weight problem will make it difficult to maintain a high level of emotional well-being. As an experiment, why not fast for a few days and then adopt the optimum diet. I guarantee you that your "inherited glandular problem" will disappear and that you will not suffer from weight problems again.

Sometimes I find myself crying a lot for no apparent reason. Can a diet cause this?

A diet that radically affects the blood-sugar level can certainly make a person easily moved to tears land breakdowns. If you will eliminate all sugar, caffeine, nicotine and alcohol from your diet, you will most likely experience a lot more emotional stability. Blood sugar quickly normalizes on a natural diet with none of the above-listed artificial foods.

Sometimes I follow a good diet for days at a time, and then I just go on a binge and eat all those yummy foods I've been denying myself. I feel bad afterwards, and I want to stop this pattern.

The most important thing is to first stop thinking of those harmful foods as "yummy" or that you are "denying" yourself of them. Chocolate ice cream, candy bars, pies, pastas, etc., are not treats—they are poisons. You have been conditioned to think of them as reward foods. They harm your body and result in your feeling bad after you eat them. When you try to stay on a good diet, do not be too hard on yourself. We all must unlearn a lot of harmful emotional associations with foods. Most people occasionally feel that they simply must have that "forbidden food." When you get these feelings, stop and look at your emotional state. Are you anxious? Nervous? Worried? If you are experiencing any negative emotional state, stay away from the food you are craving. The craving is a sign that you are trying to use the food as a substitute for facing your emotional problems.

Article #1: About Emotions And Health By Marti Fry

Herbert M. Shelton, the father of modern Natural Hygiene, wrote an article entitled "Emotions and Health" for his magazine, *Dr. Shelton's Hygienic Review*, in October of 1978. He describes the

relationship between our mental and emotional states and our physiological processes, especially the process of digestion: "Under emotional stress, any or all of the digestive secretions—saliva, gastric juice, pancreatic juice, intestinal juice, bile—may be checked, and the digestion in process when this inhibition occurs is temporarily, at least, suspended."

Dr. Shelton says the reason digestion is checked during stress is because the manufacture and flow of the secretions needed in the digestive process depends upon nerve energy. Nerve energy "is transmitted to all the organs of the body through an intricate network of nerves. *Emotional stress or shock interferes with both the generation and transmission of nerve energy.*" (Italics are ours.)

He goes on to say: "If the shock or strong emotion comes when eating is in progress, there may be a sudden loss of desire for food and eating will be discontinued. In many cases, great grief, fear, or shock will result in the food in the stomach being vomited. It is not likely that emotions check the actions of enzymes that have already been poured out upon the food in the stomach and intestine, but they inhibit the secretion of added juices that may be needed. Certainly the muscular activities of these organs are inhibited or suspended.

"This impairment of digestion will last during the entire period of shock or strong emotion and until nervous balance is restored. If enervation is profound, reaction may be slow in developing so that the undigested food undergoes fermentation and putrefaction. *Next to overeating and wrong eating, mental influences cause most of the digestive impairments with which people suffer.*" (Italics are ours.)

"These functional impairments eventually result in organic change. Organic changes are endings resulting from repeated toxemic crises."

After explaining the relationship between the emotional-mental condition and bodily processes such as digestion, Shelton tells us how we can use this knowledge. "Our Golden Rule is this: If not comfortable in both mind and body from one meal to the next, miss the next meal. If you are worried, apprehensive, grieved, angry, jealous, depressed, irritable, grouchy, petulant, fearful, or otherwise mentally distressed, wait upon the recovery of poise before eating. This is as important as not eating when in pain or when there is fever. It is as important as not eating when fatigued. Good digestion depends upon emotional poise."

Shelton also advises us that we are better off eating light, easy-to-digest foods such as fresh fruits than heavier foods, such as proteins (flesh or even nuts or seeds) or starches, when we anticipate the possibility of upcoming emotional or mental stress. He says that, to avoid discomfort and poisoning from undigested or partially digested food in our system, "there are times and occasions when we should not eat at all. If we anticipate a shock to our nervous system or if one is unavoidable, we will find it much wiser to meet the emergency with an empty rather than with a full stomach."

However, it's not just to avoid temporary discomfort that we should refrain from eating or eat very lightly during or in anticipation of a stressful situation. We should follow this rule for the sake of our long-term health also. Not only is digestion inhibited during stress1, but so is excretion (elimination). Continuous or frequent mental or emotional stress, "by inhibiting the functions of life—secretion and excretion—build chronic disease." Shelton recommends that we "free ourselves of our *imaginary troubles* and ingrowing grouches or learn to control our eating." He stresses the following point: "To cease eating, to miss a few meals at exactly the right time—the psychological moment—thus avoiding indigestion and the resulting poisoning, will do more to prevent illness than almost anything else that may be named. It is important, therefore, that we learn to adjust our living habits and particularly our eating habits to our mental stales."

Dr. Shelton says that a "big reason why so many epidemics of colds, tonsilitis, diptheria, measles, scarlet fever, etc., follow so closely upon the heels of the holiday season" is because a large quantity of the least wholesome foods are eaten during a time of great excitement. He says, "Overexcitement and overeating build a septic state of the Prima Via, poisoning the entire body." In the words of Dr. Weger, a medical doctor turned Hygienist, you are "either poised or poisoned." He was, of course, referring to the

retention of wastes during stress. Dr. Shelton says, "But, if there were no other evil effects of overworked emotions than that of checked or inhibited digestion, this alone is quite enough to result in disease. The ductless (endocrine) glands have their functions disturbed by the emotions, so that the whole process of nutrition is impaired."

While a balanced mental state and a calm emotional disposition often reflect a healthy physical condition and wholesome attitudes toward self, others, and life, poise is also necessary in order to maintain a high level of physical health. When great excitement or stresses do exist in our lives, however, let's follow Shelton's "Golden Rule" and miss the next meal. Let's remember that "good digestion depends upon emotional poise."

Article #2: Fruitarianism For Health And Long Life By Dr. O.L.M. Abramowski

Great as the improvement is in my bodily condition, the change for the better in my mental and intellectual faculties has kept pace with it. My father, when past fifty years, became a hypochondriac and also looked at life from a very gloomy point of view. When I approached the half century, I too, developed this pessimistic inclination, and I had quite accepted my fate—that I was to be an outspoken hypochondriac.

I was dissatisfied with myself and my surroundings and gave up the hope of ever reaching a better condition. Every year onwards seemed to prove to me certainly that life was not worth living!

Especially did I notice this despondent mood on awakening in the morning, when sometimes an actual fear of impending disaster would get hold of me and render my life absolutely miserable.

All this is gone now; hypochondria and despondency are long left behind. Out of the pessimist preparing for death has developed an irrepressible optimist who feels he should live a full century and spread the joyful gospel of health and rejuvenation among suffering humanity with all his youthful vigour and endurance.

Intellectually, the improvement is just as marked—my memory is vastly improved and I can concentrate my thoughts now as I never could before. Out of a decided follower of authority, public Vaccinator, etc., I have developed into a self-thinking critic, an intellectual seeker after truth. I have been able not only to get rid of an incalculable amount of old and erroneous ideas, but to go in for quite a few fields of study and observation with a zest and interest I had not known since my days at the University:

Time never hangs heavily now; all my different occupations, studies and enterprises are treated with the same absorbing interest. Still, I find time for play and exercise with the very fascinating babies in my family and for a social chat with friends in the evening. I have no fear of any disease nor any common everyday accident, as I now know my body creates the disease and is quite able to cope with accidents. I make my plans with the firm conviction that many useful years are yet in store for me and that mine should be a green old age with a quiet, painless death as the closure of my visible existence when the doors open into Life Eternal.

Article #3: The Mind-Benders by Kecki R. Sidhwa, N.D., D.O.

When people show symptoms of mental instability or mental sickness, we invariably swallow the old gobbledygook that modern psychiatry with its drugs, injections, electric shock treatments, prefrontal lobotomy or psychotherapy a la Freud, Jung or Adler will right all the wrongs in a few short sessions. But if the truth be told, and it's time we were told the truth, psychiatry as practiced today is falling apart at the seams.

Both psychiatry and psychotherapy are branches of orthodox medicine. Medicine was once based mainly on magic and still is. Plato, the Greek philosopher, believed that the womb or hysteros had a strong desire to produce children. If it remained sterile for long after puberty, it became temperamental. It started to flow around, and hysteria was attributed to this cause. Hippocrates (the so-called Father of Medicine) prescribed valerian to drive the womb back to its rightful place. In England some physicians still prescribe a mixture of valerian and bromide as a treatment for mentally depressed women. Valerian is a depressant!

Another example of physician—and drug—induced mental and emotional problems was observed in a survey. People who had taken barbiturates for one year or over had chronic psychiatric and physical complaints and made increasing demands for barbiturates. Barbiturates make people more anxious and more depressed in the long run.

Harry Solomon, a professor of Psychiatry at Harvard University, banned all barbiturates, and his patients became much more competent. It has been suggested and suspected that the taking of barbiturates addles the brains of young human embryos and affects the intelligence of the child. Yet, hospitals, doctors and psychiatrists prescribe these drugs in order to "cure" depression, insomnia and anxiety. Treatment by drugs is nearly always assumed to be good, both by the physician and the public, until proved otherwise —this takes some proving and some time—meanwhile the damage has been done.

That mental and nervous disorders spring out of our misbehaviour in life and unnatural living habits, as much as physical disorders, has to be drummed into the minds of the public as much as into the medical profession. Bad nutrition; lack of exercise; polluted air; lack of sunshine; insufficient rest and sleep; enervation; and mental and emotional habits; and the taking of drugs, medicines and social poisons like tea, coffee, chocolate, cocoa and alcohol, all lead to toxemic tissues, resulting in breakdown of brain cells and nervous tissues.

Instead of dealing with these primordial causes of our lack of well-being, the medical profession doles out pills and/or so many sessions on the analyst's couch, both causing further trouble, apart from waste of time and money.

No one knows how much illness and death is attributable to alcohol. The middle-course alcoholic has nearly four times as much sick leave from work as does an average person, and his life expectancy is reduced by ten or twelve years compared with the average. In Britain, about 1% of the population, i.e., nearly 350,000 people, are alcoholics, and a quarter of these show mental and physical deterioration. In America, the percentage is higher, 47%. Psychiatrists, with all their panhandling of substituting one stimulant for another, one drug for another, are unsuccessful at stopping people from drinking. So far, physicians have been more successful at causing addiction than at curing it.

The blame for drug addiction of all kinds can and should be rightly laid at the door of:

1. Physicians and the orthodox medical profession for lulling us into a false sense of security by drug dependence;
2. The manufacturers of drugs, alcohol and other poisons; and
3. The government which tolerates and even encourages sale of these commodities.

Drug companies are not charitable institutions. Our aches and pains, our mental discomforts and our insomnia are their gold. Not surprisingly, their most profitable drugs are those that have the public gently but surely hooked on taking them, as they ensure a regular and enthusiastic clientele. The drug companies, the breweries and the tobacco companies all exploit our addiction to various chemicals. The mind-bending process, already started from early childhood, gets its final coup de grace with the stress, strain, rat race, and political and social injustices of our modern-day society.